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BIBLICAL SOCIOLOGY. VII

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In preceding instalments we have taken up the sociological study of the Bible from various points of view. After introducing the subject, we sketched the social institutions of Israel as they were established on the common basis of Semitic life before the rise of the distinctive religion of the Bible. We pointed out that the Old Testament consists of a large variety of written material, coming from different historical periods, and illustrating stages of development in the religious life of Israel. From this analytical study, we went on to consider the process by which the earlier, heathen cult of Yahweh was gradually transformed into the religion peculiar to the Bible.

We have seen that the entire discussion can be brought to an issue around the matter of the national origin. The establishment of the Hebrew nation at the point of contact between Amorite city-states and Israelite clans from the desert, occupies the center of attention throughout the present study. The ideas and usages of the Amorites were shaped and controlled by the commercial and financial usages of long-settled civilization. They were in connection with the great Semitic empires east and west of them—the Egyptian and Babylonian. At the time of the Israelite settlement in Canaan, the Amorites were much farther away from the primitive usages and ideas of the desert than the Israelites were for a long time after that event. The legal and moral ideas of the Amorites were those of a people firmly planted on the soil. Their justice, or law (*mishpat*),[1] was necessarily very different from that of desert clans. This initial distinction must be held carefully in mind as we take up the problem of the Bible.

The contrast between the standpoints of settled civilization and the nomadic life is illustrated by nothing so well as by the

[1] We shall study this term presently.

treatment of land. In the primitive clan, a given territory or district belongs to all in common. In the very circumstances of nomadic life, the earth cannot be reduced to private property. Two clans may, by agreement, respect each other's rights to wander in adjacent parts of the wilderness; but the clan itself enjoys its territory as a common possession. The welfare of the individual is merged in that of the clan. Although a clan may plunder another group, its very breath of life is justice between its own people. Thus, the English traveler Doughty says of the desert Arabs among whom he lived that they were "commonwealths of brethren." "They divide each other's losses." They know nothing about interest on loans. "Seldom the judges and elders err, in these small societies of kindred, where the life of every tribesman lies open from his infancy, and his state is to all men well known."[2] But on the other hand, the Amorites, like the Babylonians and Egyptians, had long since reduced land to the category of private property; and they carried this principle to its logical issue, just as we do in the modern world. They regarded land as a commercial item. They bought and sold it; loaned money on it; charged interest on such loans; and when mortgages were not paid they foreclosed by legal process. In this regard their social system, or *mishpat,* can be well understood from the standpoint of modern business; but it is a mystery to the more backward Semite of the desert and the hills.

Thus we see how two different points of view came into collision during the development of Hebrew nationality at the point of contact between Israelites and Amorites. The foundation of the monarchy brought with it the forcible extension of Amorite *mishpat,* or legal usage, over the backward clans of the hill country. The highlands reacted against this from the standpoint of their ancient clan customs. The situation involved what may be figured as a head-on collision between two moral codes. The kings and nobles, being located chiefly in the fortified cities and not in the open, undefended country, took the old, Amorite standpoint, as opposed to that of the highlanders. Consequently, the national government enlisted the organized force of the king-

[2] Doughty, *Arabia Deserta* (Cambridge), I, 345, 318, 249.

dom on the side of the usages of settled civilization, putting the military and police power behind the extension of Amorite law throughout the entire social mass. It is not impossible that this outcome was foreseen by Samuel substantially as we find it in the book bearing his name (I Sam. 8). According to this passage, the people wanted a king, or *melek*. But Samuel had heard about the *meleks* in the neighboring Amorite cities; and he remembered the disastrous experience of Israel with the half-Amorite *Abimelek* in the Judges period (Judg., chaps. 8, 9). So he warned the people that they would not like the *"mishpat" of the "melek."* For the king would reduce their lands to the possession of a small class of nobles, and the peasantry would be enslaved. This, of course, is a figurative way of saying that the king, as the national fountain of justice, would represent a legal system which permitted the concentration of the soil in a few hands. Samuel's warning, in its present shape, comes no doubt from a time later than that of Samuel; but it admirably summarizes one aspect of Hebrew history from first to last.

In view of these considerations, we can see how it was that the great struggle within the nation turned primarily around the question of *mishpat*. The Hebrew government came into being at the point of contact between two peoples whose legal and moral ideas were in sharp antithesis. And while it is true that one of these peoples (the Amorites) disappeared under the name of Israel, being swallowed up in the mass of the nation, yet their *point of view* remained as a factor in the history.

I. THE "MISHPAT" STRUGGLE

Within fifty years from the time when the Amorites of Bethshan beheld the dead body of King Saul hanging on their outer fortifications (I Sam., chap. 31); within fifty years from the time when the Amorites of Gibeon were appeased by the sacrifice of Saul's grandsons (II Sam., chap. 21); within fifty years from the time when David began to contract marriages with the Amorites of Jerusalem (II Sam. 5:1–13); before the two races had become adjusted; and while David still occupied the Hebrew throne—the new nation was convulsed by a tremendous internal

struggle. The government itself became an object of contention between rival parties.

The introduction to the narratives about the great revolt led by Ahitophel and Absalom clearly implies that the law-courts were not giving popular satisfaction (II Sam. 15:1–6). In this brief passage, the highly important Bible word *mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט) occurs three times (vss. 2, 4, 6).[3] This term is one of the great, outstanding, strategic words of the Old Testament; and it conveys a wealth of meaning that is not apparent on the surface. It is variously translated by the words "justice," "ordinance." "judgment," "cause," "law," "legal right," "that which is lawful," etc. In general, it points to the legal arrangements that bind men together in social groups, such as the family, the clan, and the nation. Its importance for sociology comes out with ever-increasing distinctness and force as we investigate the problem of the Bible.

When the peasantry turned against David, the force that swung the balance in favor of the king was apparently the professional, hired soldiery under command of Benaiah (II Sam. 15:18; 20:23; cf. Zeph. 2:5). But the military victory of David could not solve the problem before the nation; and as his reign drew on to a close, the struggle broke out afresh in a conflict over the succession to the crown. It is very instructive to follow out the social position of the different elements around the two candidates (I Kings, chap. 1, *passim,* and 2:13–15). The victory of Solomon was clearly due to the same anti-popular forces that upheld his father in the recent struggle with the peasantry. The son and successor of Solomon declares: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (I Kings 12:14). After this, the vast bulk of the nation withdrew from the house of David, setting up the kingdom of Ephraim, or Israel. This drastic action, however, did not settle the national problem; and the struggle continued. One royal house after another was raised up, and then overthrown.

[3] This word is printed in transliteral form in the English versions at Gen. 14:7, where "En-*mishpat*" means "Fountain of *Justice,*" or "Fountain of *Judgment.*"

So perished the dynasties of Jeroboam and Baasha (I Kings, chaps. 14, 15, 16). In regard to the rise of the next royal house we read: "Half of the people followed Tibni ben Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri. But the people that followed Omri prevailed. So Omri reigned" (I Kings 16:21, 22). This king had the support of the regular army. He was succeeded by his son Ahab, in whose reign the prophet Elijah came forward with an awful curse against the king for seizing the land of Naboth (I Kings, chap. 21). In the same period we also find reference to the indebtedness of a prophet and the bondage of his children (II Kings 4:1). We again lose sight of detailed evidence until we reach the literary prophets of the following centuries, to whose writings we now turn. Owing to lack of space, we shall be unable to exhibit fully the evidence furnished by the prophetical books; but references will be given, so that the reader can verify statements and extend his view of the situation.[4]

It should be emphasized in the first place that the great prophets, whose books we have in the Old Testament, are preoccupied with what they call *mishpat*. The treatment of this great biblical term in modern translations cannot do full justice to the meaning with which it is charged in the original passages containing it. Beginning with Amos, in the eighth century B.C., we find the classic exhortation, "Let *mishpat* roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Advancing through the prophetic books that lie along the years, we find a steady and unwavering stress upon the same, fundamental theme, until at last the motive clothes itself in the exalted visions of the post-exilic Isaiah:

> Behold my servant, whom I sustain—my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him. He shall bring forth *mishpat* to

[4] It is to be noted that in the Naboth case (I Kings, chap. 21), the horror in the first instance does not lie in the murder of Naboth, but in the king's proposal to treat the peasant's land as an item of sale and exchange (vs. 2). It is this proposal, involving the alienation of his patrimonial soil, that arouses Naboth himself. Then it is to be further observed that the conspiracy of Jezebel against Naboth could not be carried out as a bare piece of robbery. It had to be given a *legal* form through the court of "elders and nobles" to which Naboth was answerable (vs. 8). The murder, in fact, was a mere incident in the case. Naboth's crime, in the eyes of Jezebel, consisted in *lèse majesté*. He had spurned what the official classes viewed as a perfectly just and reasonable demand on the part of the king.

the nations. A cracked reed he shall not break, and the dimly burning wick he shall not extinguish. He shall faithfully bring forth *mishpat*. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set *mishpat* in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law [Isa. 42:1–4].[5]

In the voices of these mighty prophets, deep answers unto deep across the tumults of history.[6]

We are now prepared to look farther into the problem. The entire struggle turns around the question, What is good law? It does not raise a mere personal, individual, or private issue. It involved the *legal* arrangements of the community. It drew the courts into its purview; and so it swept the kings, nobles, elders, and ruling classes into the center of the arena. It was a wide-ranging movement, which brought royal dynasties into being, and then wrecked them, one after another; finally giving birth to the conception of the ideal king, the anointed of Yahweh, who should set *mishpat* in the earth, while the nations waited for his law. The prophets declaimed against the rulers of their day, and looked forward to the coming of good rulers in the future. All the prophetic emphasis upon the official class refers fundamentally to the interests of *mishpat*. Amos desires to see *mishpat* established "in the gate," meaning thereby the courts of law, which were controlled by the upper classes (Amos 5:15). Hosea directs his word squarely against "the house of the king" (Hos. 5:1).[7]

The problem becomes increasingly vivid and concrete as we realize that the national struggle had much to do with the land question. Samuel's warning about the *mishpat* of the kingdom puts great emphasis upon the concentration of landed property

[5] To translate the term *mishpat* in this passage merely as "religion" is to obscure the fundamental meaning. The word is here distinctly related to consideration for the poor, who are symbolized by the cracked reed and the dim wick. As Whitehouse observes, the word is here used "to express the entirety of 'judgments' or customs (usages) of Yahweh's religion." *Commentary on Isaiah* (New York: Frowde), II, 81.

[6] In spite of differences of expression, the same problem of *mishpat* is common to all the prophets. Further references are: Amos 5:7, 15, 24; 6:12; Hosea 2:19; 5:10–11; Micah 3:1–3, 8; 6:8; Isa. 1:17, 23, 27; 3:14; 10:1–2; 30:18; 32:1; Zeph. 3:1–5; Jer. 5:1, 5, 27, 28; 7:5; 9:23, 24; 21:12; 22:1–3, 15, 16; Ezek. 18:5, 8, 9, 13, 17, 19, 21, 27; 20:13, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25; 33:14, 15, 16, 19; 34:16; 45:9–12.

[7] See further: Amos 3:15; 6:1–6; 6:8; 7:9; Hos. 9:15; Micah 3:1–3, 9–11; 7:3; Isa. 1:17, 23, 27; 3:2, 14; 10:1–2; 32:1; Zeph. 3:1–5; Jer. 1:18; 5:1, 5, 27, 28; 7:5; 9:23, 24; 19:1; 21:12; 22:1–3; 22:15–16; 25:15–18; 36, *passim;* Ezek. 34:1–16 f.; 46:18.

in the hands of the nobles (I Sam. 8:14, 15). Elijah condemned Ahab for seizing the land of Naboth (I Kings, chap. 21). Micah and Isaiah condemned the official class for adding house to house and field to field (Micah 2:1, 2; Isa. 3:14; 5:8). Ezekiel demands that the king shall not seize the people's land to thrust them out (Ezek. 46:18). The prophets make no distinction between seizing land, as Ahab did in the case of Naboth, and foreclosing a mortgage. All concentration of land is in the same category, in their view, and is condemned because it removes the soil from the ancient clanships. The book of Deuteronomy, which is impregnated with the prophetic spirit, curses the removal of landmarks (Deut. 19:14; 27:17).[8]

It is worth while to say rather forcibly that, so far as the purely *economic* facts are concerned, the struggle within the Hebrew nation was not in any way, nor at any time, peculiar to Israel. In its earlier stages indeed, the great *mishpat* conflict had no distinctive character. For the same situation was reproduced, in principle, in the history of all the ancient peoples concerning whom we have knowledge. This fact is emphasized for the reason that many persons appear to have got an impression that the writer is claiming something peculiar, or distinctive, in regard to the purely material, or economic, aspect of Israel's history. It may, therefore, justly be inquired, In what, then, *does* the distinction of Israel reside? The answer to this question will occupy the next part of our study.

II. THE CULT STRUGGLE

The peculiarity of Israel's history is rooted in the fact that the "mishpat" conflict at length found expression in religious terms. The struggle within the nation slowly took the form of antagonism between Yahweh and the Baals, the gods of the two races that united to form the nation.

The vast religious possibilities inclosed in the national experience revealed themselves only in a very gradual way to

[8] The post-exilic book of Leviticus, however, practically nullifies the entire prophetic movement in this regard by providing that mortgaged land may be held until "the year of jubilee," when it shall revert to the original owner in fee simple. It is needless to say that this law was rigorously observed by post-exilic Judaism, *with the exception of the jubilee clause* (Lev. 25:35–41).

Israel's prophets and thinkers. The struggle within the nation took on its characteristic biblical form by slow stages that expanded through generations and centuries. In the times of David, Solomon, Rehoboam, and the early age of the two kingdoms, it had no religious character in the conventional Old-Testament sense. It began as a *mishpat* struggle, uncomplicated with anything else. The people revolted against the rule of David because they did not find satisfactory justice at his hands; they were restive under Solomon because he "burdened the people with a heavy yoke"; and they cast off the government of Rehoboam because he would institute no reforms. There was no question of conflicting gods here. No conflict of worships entered into the situation.[9]

But coming up into the following century, in the times of Elijah and Elisha (ninth century B.C.), we find ourselves in a different atmosphere. The social struggle now begins to be linked, in a public way, with the clash of cults. The prophet Elijah comes forward, in the name of Yahweh, to curse Ahab for seizing the land of the peasant Naboth. The king has been acting under the influence of Jezebel, his Phoenician wife, whose former home was in the wealthy, commercial city of Sidon. Her advent as queen of Israel has been marked by the introduction of the cult of the Sidonian Baal. The economic phase of the situation has been described thus by Budde:

> Together with Baal-worship, foreign despotic methods were creeping into north Israel, and ever wider grew the chasm between the over-refined and sensuous court and the oppressed and impoverished people who must furnish it the means for its exuberant luxury. Palestine was a small and relatively poor country, and it must have borne hard on its people when the king undertook to emulate the rich city kings of the Phoenicians.[10]

In other words, under the monarchy the struggle of Yahweh against other gods began as a protest against the Baals imported from *nearby places*. Elijah declaimed against the Baal of Sidon and the Baal of Ekron (I Kings, chap. 18; II Kings,

[9] The condemnation of Solomon for worshiping the gods of surrounding nations (I Kings, chap. 11) is recognized as an insertion in the spirit of Deuteronomy (vss. 1–8). Even if the prophet Ahijah condemned him for worshiping other gods, this was privately whispered in a lonely field (vs. 29), and would not affect our argument if the account were literal history.

[10] Budde, *Religion of Israel to the Exile* (New York, 1899), 119.

chap. 1). In the same way, the JE documents begin by denouncing the Baal of Peor and the gods of Aramea (Num. 25:2, 3, 5; Gen. 35:2). As a result of this growing protest against foreign cults, Jehoram, the successor of Ahab, put away an obelisk, or pillar, of Baal (II Kings 3:1, 2). The real climax to the work of Elijah and Elisha, however, was the terrible revolution of Jehu, in which the house of Ahab went down in torrents of blood. The worshipers of the Phoenician Baal were killed; and the cult of this foreign god was driven out of Israel (II Kings, chaps. 9, 10). A corresponding movement occurred a few years later in Judah (II Kings, chap. 11).

None of the southern prophets of the following century (the eighth, B.C.) has anything to say about the Amorite Baals. The school of Amos, Micah, and Isaiah does not succeed in expressing the *mishpat* struggle in terms of religious, or cult, conflict. It was not in Judah, but in Ephraim, that Israel mixed most thoroughly with the Amorites and served their Baals. It has been pointed out by Professor G. A. Smith that while Israel was everywhere a mixed race, the foreign elements in the north were mostly Amorite, while the foreign elements in the south were mostly Arabian.[11] Professor J. F. McCurdy recognizes that "it was in northern Israel, where agriculture was more followed than in the southern kingdom, that Baal worship was most insidious and virulent."[12]

While the Judean prophets of the eighth century B.C. were struggling with the *mishpat* problem, a star of the first magnitude arose in the north. The prophet Hosea ben Beeri marks an advance upon the southern writers of that period, as well as upon the JE documents. His ideas were suggested by the prevailing Baal worship in Ephraim, and also by a personal experience. A great sadness came into his home. He discovered that his wife was unfaithful. Out of this heavy affliction, he got the analogy of Israel playing the harlot against Yahweh—committing whoredom by following the local Baals derived from the

[11] G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London, 1904), 316.

[12] *Jewish Encyc.*, art. "Baal." "The shepherd's occupation was especially prominent in Judah, where there is much less arable land than in the central districts of Palestine."—Addis, *Hebrew Religion* (London, 1906), 82.

Amorite side of the nation's ancestry. Hosea makes frequent use of the term "Baal" (Hos. 2:8, 13, 14–17; 11:1, 2; 13:1). By suggesting the intimate figure of conflict between the local cults of Israel itself as an expression of the *mishpat* struggle, he makes an advance upon his predecessors and contemporaries. Yet even Hosea does not weld religion and morality together in words that he who runs may read and understand. He does not succeed in finding language and conceptions that make his thought perfectly clear. In other words, he did not *standardize* the prophetic platform in the final, characteristic shape in which it impresses itself on posterity.

To find the culmination of the prophetic movement, we must leave the eighth century and go on to seventh and sixth centuries. The prophet Jeremiah carries the Hosean figure of whoredom to its logical issue as a definite expression or symbol of the *mishpat* struggle. This is a clear step in advance. It was through Jeremiah, and contemporary Judean writers, that the religious ideas of Israel began to take on their characteristic biblical form. Yahweh will utter his *mishpat* against the people in regard to *all* their wickedness, in *that* they have forsaken him and burned incense to other gods (Jer. 1:16). The "other gods" in question are primarily the Amorite Baals, as Jeremiah declares again and again (2:23; 7:9; 9:14; 11:13, cf. 3:24; 11:17; 12:16; 19:5; 23:13; 32:35). Jeremiah, in fact, is the pupil of Hosea, and is the first of the southern prophets to take the Baals up into the terms of the *mishpat* campaign. In the century lying between these two writers, Judah had been thrown open more widely to the influences of the outer world; and the worship of the Baals appears to have grown more common in the south. Jeremiah definitely and explicitly makes other gods the symbols of all that the prophets abhor. This evil people, who refuse to hear the words of Yahweh, are gone after other gods (13:10). The people have forsaken Yahweh—and walked after other gods. They have forsaken Yahweh—and have not kept his law (16:11). Thus we see that serving other gods becomes the definite verbal symbol or figure for breaking the law of Yahweh as declared by the prophets. The *mishpat* struggle in Israel is at

last clothed in religious terms. Jeremiah, the last of the pre-exilic prophets, was not only the pupil of Hosea; but he was the heir of all his predecessors; and he improved nobly upon his heritage.

The method thus elaborated spread itself out over the literature of Israel as the Old Testament came into being. The book of Deuteronomy is a Judean product, issuing from about the age of Jeremiah. As modern criticism has shown, it was the first Old Testament writing to become "canonical" scripture. In this important book the Baals of the Amorites are chiefly before the writer's mind when denouncing "other gods" (7:1–5, 25; 12:2–4; 12:30; 20:16–18; 31:16). The worship of the Baals is equated, or identified, with everything that the prophets denounce. Thus, the people shall not turn aside from *any* of the words of Yahweh *to go* after "other gods" (28:14). In another general passage, of equal force, walking after other gods is the precise opposite of keeping the "commandments, statutes, and ordinances" of Yahweh (*mitswoth, hukoth,* and *mishpatim,* 30:16, 17).[13] To the same effect, in the Deuteronomic editorial passages of the books of Kings, we read that if the people do not keep the *mishpatim,* etc., of Yahweh, *but* shall go and serve other gods, then Israel shall be cut off and cast aside (I Kings 9:4, 6, 7). Finally, in the concluding chapters of Kings, the Deuteronomic writer sums up the entire situation: The children of Israel sinned against Yahweh: feared other gods: walked in the statutes (*hukoth*) of the nations whom Yahweh cast out before Israel (i.e., the Amorites); therefore, Judah and Israel were carried away into exile (II Kings 17:7, 8, 19, 20).

In connection with the foregoing passage, and similar ones, another fact of primary importance emerges into view, demanding instant recognition and emphasis: After the Baals of the Amorites had become the symbols and figures of all that the prophets abhorred, then a new circle of expressions and concepts came into use. Opposition to the *mishpat* of Yahweh could now be spoken of either as "following the gods of the Amorites," or as "walking in the *mishpat* of the Amorites," precisely as in

[13] In these general passages, *mishpatim* becomes synonymous with *hukoth* (statutes), *mitswoth* (commands), *toroth* (laws or instructions), and *eduth* (testimonies).

the last citation from Kings. To the earlier prophets of the Judean school, the national struggle was a mere conflict between *mishpat* and "wormwood" (Amos 5:7; 6:12), in which the official classes were simply ignorant of what *mishpat* was (Mic. 3:1–2), and in which the rulers turned the "sweet" into the "bitter" (Isa. 5:20). The earlier prophets could express themselves no more clearly than this, because they were fighters dealing with a new situation whose possibilities they could not wholly see. But by the time of the Deuteronomists, the intellectual horizon of Israel was broader. It now began to be seen that the national struggle was not a mere conflict between *mishpat* on the one side and "wormwood" on the other, as Amos crudely expressed it, but a reaction between two different ideas of *mishpat,* growing out of the double ancestry of the Hebrew nation. So that it now became an easy matter to vary the terms in which the situation was described. The Deuteronomists, indeed, had before their eyes the spectacle of alien peoples brought into northern Israel from other parts of the Semitic world, whose *mishpat* (like that of the Amorites) was contrary to the *mishpat* of Yahweh; and this object lesson could not fail to be impressive (II Kings 17:24–41). The truth here coming into view takes on more positive definition as we proceed.

Ezekiel, who wrote in the time of the Babylonian captivity, was influenced by the Deuteronomic attitude toward the Amorites. "Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations." "Thine origin and thy nativity is of the land of the Canaanite. The Amorite was thy father" (Ezek. 16:2–3). Israel did not do after the *mishpat* of Yahweh, but after that of the nations round about (11:12); and because they did not execute Yahweh's law, he gave the people *mishpat* that was "not good" (20:24, 25). Continuing our quest, we turn from Ezekiel to the so-called "Holiness Code," which composes the central part of Leviticus (chaps. 17–26). Israel shall not do after the doings of the land of Canaan. They shall not walk in the statutes (*hukoth*) of the former inhabitants. *But*—they shall do the *mishpat* of Yahweh (Lev. 18:3–5).[14] Finally, the entire struggle of Yahweh

[14] The "abominations" of the Amorites cannot be viewed as restricted to sexual impurity, although this form of sin is included with the rest. The book of Leviticus itself, which puts

throughout all of Israel's long history was viewed as a campaign against "the iniquity of the Amorite." The patriarch Abraham is told that he cannot inherit the land of Canaan himself, because "the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16). In time, the descendants of Abraham are assured that "for the wickedness of these nations, Yahweh doth drive them out before thee" (Deut. 9:4). And at last, because they, in turn, walked in all the iniquity of the Amorite, the Israelites themselves were carried away into exile; and the curtain dropped on the national history (II Kings 17:18, etc.).

In the first number of the present series we learned that the Old Testament was arranged by writers who were not contemporary with the events described, and who made use of many documents which they inherited from their forefathers. Moreover, we saw that their purpose, or object, in all this literary activity was a moral one. They were sitting in judgment on history, and uttering moral verdicts on the past. In this connection, we are now prepared to see that the men who gave us the Hebrew Bible did not express their judgments primarily in a general or abstract form:

The base line of moral measurement in the making of Scripture is "the iniquity of the Amorite." The Bible editors' point of departure is judgment upon the Hebrew nation from the standpoint of Canaanite usages.

The religion of the Bible could never have conquered heathenism in Israel and in the world at large, unless it had thus become an absolutely *exclusive* principle which identified religion, or cult, with the moral strivings of humanity. We of the modern world fail to see this at first, because for us the "other gods" do not exist. There is no danger that we shall bow down to idols and serve the gods whom the images are supposed to represent. So the modern Christian quietly drops the biblical polemic against the Baals. He contents himself with emphasizing the ethical nature and moral demands of God, as expressed in the Bible; and he uses the "other gods" merely as the figures, or symbols,

the *mishpat* of Yahweh over against that of the Amorites in such a broad and general way, is careful to show that the law of Yahweh includes all that the pre-exilic prophets had in view (Lev. 19:13–15; 25:35–41). For an interesting sidelight, see Neh., chap. 5.

of immorality and injustice. But we could never have taken the One God as the symbol of our highest moral strivings, nor the other gods as the emblems of moral darkness, had it not been for the work of Israel's religious thinkers who wrought on the basis of Hebrew social development. Lacking the Bible religion, or something identical in principle, the world must have stood forever on the moral plane of Greece and Rome as illustrated by the pagan philosophers. For the philosopher, unlike the prophet, cannot transmute the God-idea into an *instrument of conscience*. We may then justly say, in orthodox phrase, that Israel's distinction is not economic or political, but religious in the sense that our fathers always believed it to be. And we reach this conclusion by the sociological method of investigating history from the standpoint of group organization. We do not deny that the religion of Israel acquired more and more of a spiritual and supersensuous character; but it must be strongly insisted that the social process itself is the concrete reality around which the Bible faith takes form. Yahweh, the god of Israel, became *Yahweh El Olam*—the "God of the rolling years," who unceasingly works forward through the ages in the redemption of the world.

The cult of the Hebrew nation became a world-faith because it succeeded in dramatizing God as the Leading Actor in the social process.[15]

[15] We have expressed this fact in slightly different form, outside the present series, in a paper entitled "Sociology and Theism," *American Journal of Sociology*, May, 1907. The scientific question here is distinct from the profounder problem of religion and theology; and the progress of research ought to make this increasingly evident. From the scientific standpoint, the most that we can do is to ascertain the facts and set them in their actual historical relations to each other. Beyond this attempt science may not go. For the scientific investigator to dogmatize about the metaphysical possibilities of the case is just as illiberal as the most narrow traditionalism of the old school. At this point, the problem becomes a matter of religious faith and theological formulation. Let the facts or categories of Hebrew history be reduced to their barest and most rationalistic terms; and even then the Christian may hold, without fear of contradiction, that the personal God of the universe was at work *within those terms* in a way that we cannot understand any more than we can comprehend how our *own* personality works within the terms of our daily experience. The Christian religion will always rest upon faith that the God of the universe was at work within the terms of Hebrew history, lifting the minds and souls of men gradually upward from heathenism to an exclusive, ethical, redemptive monotheism. From the scientific standpoint, this result was achieved by the "evolution of the Yahweh cult." The writer has made a statement of his position in *The American Journal of Theology* (Chicago), April, 1908.

III. ESTABLISHMENT AND SPREAD OF BIBLE RELIGION

So far as the fundamental development of Bible religion goes, the great strategic steps were all taken before the Babylonian Exile. In that earlier period the events occurred which marked the religion of Israel off in distinction from its original heathen character, as well as from the cults of paganism. Everything that came after the Exile either stereotyped the results of the pre-exilic process in the form of legal regulations (the priestly school), or drew out their implicit conclusions in more explicit forms (Jesus, Paul, etc.). The re-establishment of Judah as a dependency upon outside empires (Persia, Greece, Rome) was marked by the setting-up of the Yahweh religion in its character as an ethical monotheism involving the redemptive idea. This religion was withdrawn from profane contact by an elaborate system of priestly institutions. The legal regulations of the priesthood were no doubt necessary, as a kind of artificial support, or crutch, at that period of social evolution. The law was figured by Paul as a pedagogue leading the people toward a new stage of history (Gal. 3:24). The great danger to which the Jewish church was exposed was that of compromise with its own forms and ceremonies. The official classes, indeed, put altogether too much emphasis upon the mere *act* of worshiping the One God; and they overlooked, or obscured, the prophetic identification of this God with the highest moral strivings of humanity. But the masses of the humble folk were truer to the old ideals; and they furnished the social energy for a great religious revival which, under the form of Messianism (Christianity), carried the Bible religion throughout the world.

The relation of the Hebrew Scriptures to the New Testament has been stated by the author of the book of Hebrews in terms which will be more and more appreciated as interpreters of the Bible acquire the evolutionary habit of thought. In the olden time, he writes, the character of God was expressed by the prophets in "divers portions" and in "divers ways." This exactly corresponds to what we have learned about the individuality of the different Old Testament writers, and the gradual way in which they formulated the *mishpat* struggle in terms of an-

tagonism between Yahweh and "other gods." If we look at these writers in serial order, one after the other, each by himself, we realize the profound historical insight of the author of Hebrews. Each Old Testament writer or school had a part to play in building up the conception of God. So that finally, in the long run, there is no single writer or school which deserves credit for the full-orbed idea of the Redeeming God which breaks upon us from the Old Testament *as a whole.* Thus, the religion of Israel at last reached a point where it was logically finished, but not practically complete. For there was as yet no historical personality to which the entire process could attach itself. Every idea that moves the world has to be condensed, or focused, in the life of an individual before the idea can be applied most effectively. While the Old Testament puts God at the center of the drama of redemption, it ends by leaving the redemptive idea in the form of an abstract religious philosophy. The situation has been well stated by the historian Macaulay in the following words:

> Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of men must have images. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshipers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception: but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust.[16]

Jesus of Nazareth saw what few or none of his contemporaries perceived, that up to his time nobody had "known God." While we may not penetrate the depths of his soul, across the ages, the essential conditions of his environment are laid open before us; and the book of Hebrews helps us to realize the facts. In the olden time, God's character was expressed in "divers portions" and in "divers ways"; but at last, the gospel of redemption was embodied in *a son,* who was the very "image" of God, and the "effulgence of his glory" (Heb. 1:1–3). How much fuller

[16] Macaulay, *Essay on Milton,* par. 38.

of meaning do these words become as we look at them in the light of history! The idea of the Redeeming God was now at length fully taken up into an individual, compressed within the limits of one life, incarnated in a single person, embodied in Jesus.[17] Not until the incarnation had become a fact could the Bible religion pass the confines of Judaism and spread throughout the world. Not until devotion and faith could rally round a historical *Person* was it possible for this religion to enter the path of world conquest and go from victory to victory. While men have differed about the incarnation, and probably always will, it works just as effectively in human history whether its real psychological nature is known or not.

This is not the place to enter upon a lengthy discussion of Jesus; and we make the concluding observations brief. Biblical interpreters who draw a line between the Old and New Testaments make the task of exposition impossible. The Old Testament revolves around a *people,* and raises up a great structure of religious belief. The New Testament revolves around a *person* who puts the religion of Israel to work on the field of history. The two parts of the Bible, therefore, stand in the relation of structure and function. The shifting of emphasis cannot destroy the unity of the process represented by the entire Bible. Hence, the criticism of the New Testament cannot be complete until we reckon more fully with the older portion of Scripture. The religion of Israel was delivered from the danger of becoming a mere philosophy by one fact: It was luminous with the great messianic hope, which anticipated the coming of him who should set *mishpat* in all the earth. The messianic idea is the bridge between the Old Testament and the New. The line of connection between Jesus and the Hebrew Scripture is direct and certain. He was recognized in his own day both as a prophet and as the fulfilment of the prophet's messianic sayings.

The messianic, or Christian, church took its rise in the belief that the personal life of Jesus continued beyond the Crucifixion. It is not for us here to inquire how this belief was caused. The attitude of different classes toward Jesus is a matter of great

[17] The Hebrew form of this name is *Joshua,* which means: "Yahweh is salvation."

sociological significance, and is precisely what might be expected in view of the Old Testament situation already outlined. The New Testament sources agree that the followers of Jesus during his lifetime were drawn chiefly from the lower social classes (Mark 12:37; Luke 19:47, 48; John 7:48, 49). Consistently with this, the testimony of Paul shows that not many of the mighty or the noble were found in the early church (I Cor. 1:26). But within the New Testament period itself a great social transformation began to come over the Christian communities. One of the original forces at work in the development of Bible religion was prejudice against the wealthy, as such; and it was only as this feeling was partly overcome that wealthy men, like Nehemiah, became active in organizing the Jewish church (Neh. 5:1–19). It was only as this unreasoning prejudice was again partly suppressed that the wealthy were able to pour out their treasure in the interest of Christian organization. The development of all institutions has taken place at the point of contact between two or more classes or races; and society has always included contrary forces within its evolving structure. Even during the New Testament period, the church began to count more and more of the wealthy among its members. The slave-owner Philemon is one of the signs of this change (cf. the Epistle of Paul to Philemon). A general warning against the tendency to make terms with the wealthy appeared in the form of a letter sent out to all the churches during New Testament times (cf. the general Epistle of James 2:1–6). But the transformation of the church at large went steadily on. The second and third centuries after Christ were marked by the decreasing influence of the lower class. The wealthy multiplied their offerings, and frequently gave property to the church in their wills. "Before the close of the third century," says Gibbon, "many considerable estates were conferred on the opulent churches of Rome, Milan, Carthage, Antioch, Alexandria, and the other great cities of Italy and the provinces."[18] In the early part of the fourth century the conversion of the Emperor Constantine gave security and legality to the new religious organiza-

[18] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xv.

tion. The church now became a state institution, divided sharply into laity and clergy, its higher officers holding great estates in trust, and assimilated with the secular nobility.[19] Thus, the poverty-stricken groups of apostolic believers were at length transformed into the Roman Catholic church.

But the church had hardly achieved its organization when the empire that protected it fell to pieces before the onslaughts of barbarians from northern Europe. When the curtain rose upon the history of Europe society consisted of numerous warlike and struggling groups which were passing out of the stage of nomadism, and finding permanent homes. We have already seen that the effect of war is to consolidate competitive groups and extend the principles of authority.[20] The barbarians were thus organized into upper and lower classes. They were not "converted" in the sense that we now understand by the term. For they accepted the religion of the Bible, symbolized by the Messiah, almost on the basis of their earlier paganism. The hopefulness of the situation lay, not in what was at once achieved, but in the unfolding power for civilization and progress that lay wrapped up within the terms of the Bible religion. The heathen pantheon, with its greater and lesser deities, was displaced by the Catholic system, with God the Father at the head, and in connection with him the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary, and a host of saints and angels. Roman Catholic missionaries converted the chiefs; and then the religion of the chiefs became the religion of the lower classes. The Christian conquest of heathenism resulted at first merely in the exchange of one state religion for another. Thus we see how the social evolution of Europe during the Middle Ages was under the control of an upper class consisting of kings, nobles, and the princes of the Roman church. It was under this régime that all the great nations of Western Europe rose out of barbarism into civilization.

The bearing of the social problem upon religion is manifested with acute emphasis at periods of *transition.* We have shown this to be the case in the prophetic development of Bible religion

[19] Rainey, *The Ancient Catholic Church* (New York, 1902), 318.

[20] "Industrial Institutions of Israel," *American Journal of Sociology*, January, 1909, 497–515. Cf. *Am. Jour. Sociol.*, May, 1902, 763 f.

out of heathenism; and we have seen that the social problem was rejected in the Jewish church. It comes into view in early Christian history, only to be suppressed again by the course of events in the Roman Empire and mediaeval Europe. But as the European states verged upon the close of the Middle Ages, the social problem once more began to press for solution. At that time the older, tribal usages of the Germanic peoples were being displaced by the extension of Roman jurisprudence throughout Europe. This affected, for instance, the treatment of land, which passed from communal to individual control, depriving the peasant masses of many rights formerly enjoyed by them. The Roman church instinctively took the side of the Roman law, and thus helped to create the atmosphere in which the Protestant Reformation took place. The vast landed property of the church was taken over by the Protestant states; and the situation was temporarily relieved.[21]

The confiscation of Church lands, and the opening of the New World, resulted once more in the suppression of the social problem as a conscious factor in religious history. The Protestant churches, having repudiated the centralized authority of the Roman church, fell into local groups upheld by the civil states, and parted by small differences of doctrine. The progress of education and intercourse made religious toleration a social necessity; and at length, in the nineteenth century, state and church were separated, either in law or in fact, throughout western civilization.

In the mean while, the compacting of society throughout the modern world has again forced the social problem to the front. But now, since church and state are no longer intimately connected, *the social problem, for the first time in history, has no*

[21] It has been shown by Macaulay Trevelyan that John Wikliffe, "the Morning-Star of the Reformation," was an economic heretic before he challenged the religious doctrines of Romanism. "His demand for disendowment preceded his purely doctrinal heresies." "His attack on the whole organization and the most prominent doctrines of the Mediaeval church is found in its fulness only in his later works." Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wikliffe* (London, 1899), 170. Cf. Wikliffe, *Select English Works* (Oxford, 1869–71; Arnold's ed.), III, 216, 217; and Lindsay, *The Reformation* ("Internat. Theol. Library," New York, 1906), I, pp. 8, 79–113. It should be said, in justice to the facts, that the economic interpretation of the Protestant revolt does not exhaust its entire meaning.

apparent contact with religion. The circumstances in which we find ourselves today are fraught with perplexity; but there can be no doubt that society will, as at earlier periods, go safely through the religious, intellectual, and political transition upon which we are now entering. The awakening of the church to the social problem is one of the most important signs of the times. For many centuries, the social side of religion has not been emphasized as it is now. We are, indeed, only at the beginning of a new epoch. The developments now going forward are so complex, and there are so many cross currents in the main stream of history, that the problem of interpreting the age to itself is vast and appalling. We venture to say, however, that the present social awakening of the church brings it into a new relation to the Scriptures, and that a great surprise awaits the rank and file of religious people. The modern scientific interpretation of the Bible carries with it possibilities that are as yet unknown to the laity, and only partially realized among professional scholars. The new view of the Bible is in line with the present social awakening; whereas, the older, traditional view agrees equally with the former individualistic emphasis upon history and life. It is well, therefore, to point out that the sociological study of the Bible is no mere delving into the dust of antiquity, but a matter of modern interest. When we study the Bible from this point of view, we are investigating the religion of modern society. The religious consciousness and institutions of the Christian world are a projection of the life of ancient Israel across the intervening ages into the midst of our own times. The Bible is full of modern interest and instruction. In the words of a recent, widely noticed editorial, as the student—

> observes the evolution of political and social life in Bible times and sees the consequent evolution of moral and religious ideals, it becomes perfectly natural for him to employ in the attempt to understand the life of his own day and generation those very principles which have proved to be fruitful in the understanding of the Bible. He is thus prepared in spirit to make a positive and efficient use of the help which social science and history furnish in the analysis and solution of our own moral problems.[22]

[22] *Biblical World* (Chicago), October, 1909, editorial.

The point of chief danger in the present social awakening of the church does not lie in over-emphasis upon the social factor, but in the insidious attempt to compromise the church with programs of social reform. If the church should lend itself to a social program it would be forced to take up some definite position with regard to politics and economics. But since men have always differed about politics, those who did not favor the program adopted by the church could not support the organization; and this would convert the church into a political party. Our chief guide here must be the testimony of experience. The witness of history is in favor of the separation of church and state. The church may be compared to a great electric dynamo, whose function is to convert power into useful forms. Any proposal that seeks to turn the church away from its function as a moral and spiritual generator of energy, looks back to the troublous times when church and state were connected, and religious questions were economic and political issues.

[NOTE.—The foregoing series is to be published in revised form as a book, under the title *Sociological Study of the Bible*. A discussion of the general thesis by prominent Semitic scholars is omitted from the present connection for lack of space; but it may appear in connection with the book.]